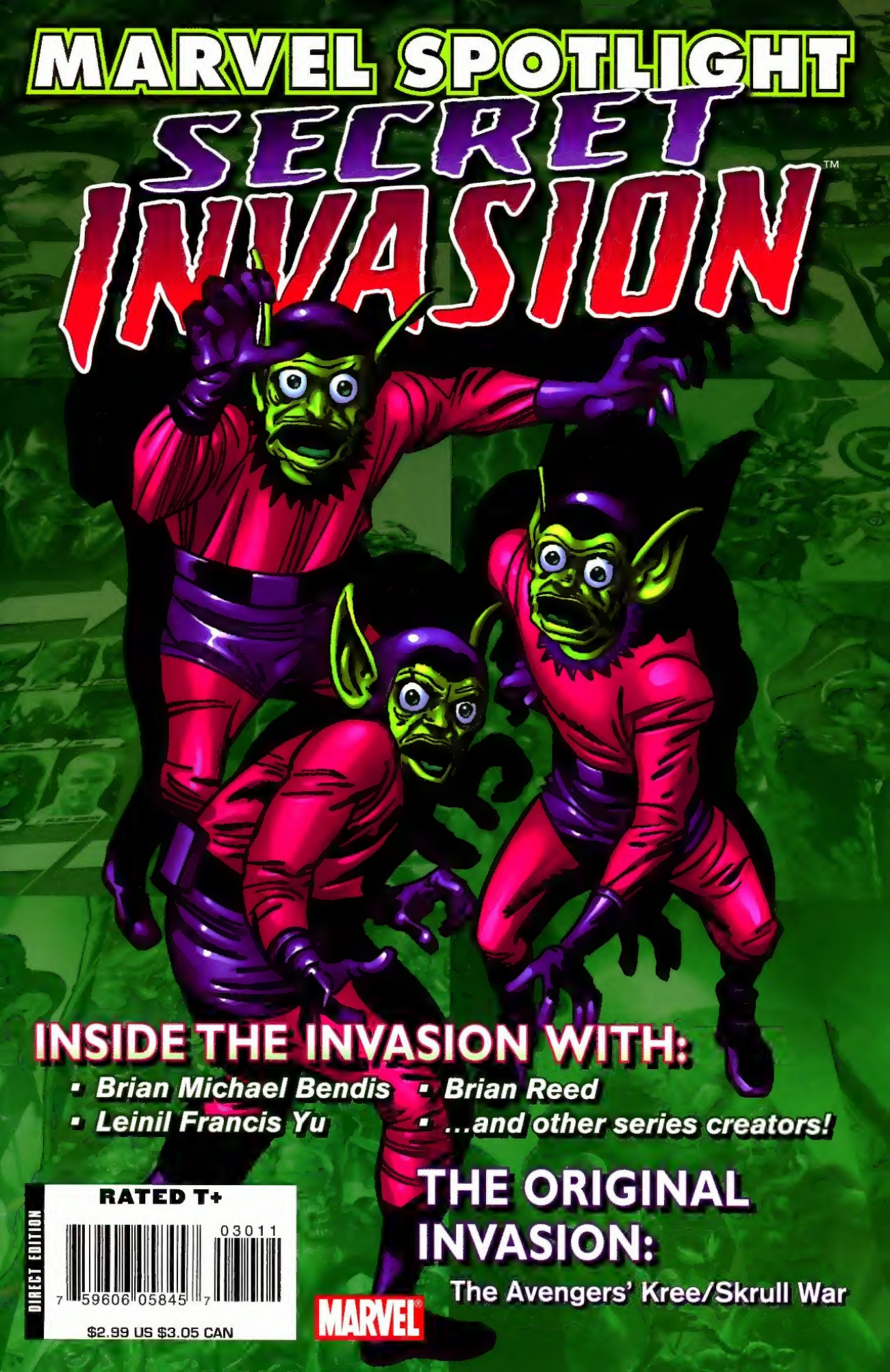
MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

SECRET INVASION™



INSIDE THE INVASION WITH:

- Brian Michael Bendis
- Leinil Francis Yu
- Brian Reed
- ...and other series creators!

THE ORIGINAL INVASION:

The Avengers' Kree/Skrull War

RATED T+

DIRECT EDITION

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$2.99 US $3.05 CAN

MARVEL®

PLUGGING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The infiltration is complete. *Secret Invasion* has begun! *Marvel Spotlight* helps readers gripped in Skrull mania catch a breath and get caught up on the next year's worth of *SI* thrills, chills and comics excitement!

I: Secrets Of The *Secret Invasion* With Brian Michael Bendis

The man with the plan several years in the making, writer and *Secret Invasion* major domo Brian Michael Bendis takes us behind the curtain of the Skrull infiltration!

II: On the Front Lines With Brian Reed

Bendis' right-hand man on *Spider-Woman: Origin* and *New Avengers: The Illuminati*, writer Brian Reed takes some of the spotlight to show off *SI*-influenced storylines in his *Ms. Marvel*, *Captain Marvel* and *Secret Invasion: Front Line*.

III: An Invasion By Design: Artist Leinil Francis Yu

Artist extraordinaire Leinil Francis Yu has drawn out the rising paranoia and mistrust borne by the Skrull infiltration during his run as *New Avengers* artist. Now he gets to take it up a notch in the *Secret Invasion* limited series!

IV: Anarchy In The UK: *Captain Britain*'s Paul Cornell

It's a British Invasion in the pages of new series *Captain Britain & MI:13*, written by Paul Cornell and featuring much-beloved UK characters Pete Wisdom and the titular Brian Braddock.

V: The Kree/Skrull War Revisited: The Original "Secret Invasion"

Roy Thomas checks in with *Spotlight* to give his reflections on the Avengers premier cosmic epic from the swinging, Skrull-filled early '70s.

VI: Skrull Public Enemy #1: The Fantastic Four

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa highlights Skrull vengeance on their oldest foes — and a surprise appearance by a long-lost FF supporting cast member — in *Secret Invasion: Fantastic Four*!

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SECRETS OF THE SECRET INVASION

BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS PULLS BACK THE CURTAIN ON THE COMIC EVENT YEARS IN THE MAKING!

By JOHN RHETT THOMAS

Over the last three and a half years — in the pages of *New Avengers*, *House of M*, *Secret War*, *Spider-Woman: Origin* and other titles — astute Marvel fans have been watching the many machinations of Brian Michael Bendis and wondering when the method to his madness would be revealed. From the dangling plot threads left over from the very first story arc of *New Avengers*, to the "blink and you miss it" appearance of a Skrull in *House of M*, to the disappearance of Nick Fury from the Marvel scene and the downright odd behavior of cult favorite character Spider-Woman, it's inspired many fans to ask, in the spirit of a classic Tom Waits song, "What the heck is he building in there?!?!"

Writer Brian Michael Bendis

Spotlight's interview with Brian Bendis uncovers a few of the secrets behind the curtain of the Skrull invasion that has, no lie, *taken over* the Marvel Universe.

SPOTLIGHT: As we go to press, the third issue of Secret Invasion is getting ready to hit stands. You've been orchestrating this event for over three years now. How do things feel right now?

BRIAN: You know what, honestly, it has gone over pretty well. I had planned (this story) for years, not exactly sure what shape it was gonna take. Then, my bosses at Marvel were kind of leaning on me, saying, "Hey, if you want to do it right, it's got to be a big Marvel event."

I thought I had already done a big Marvel event (with *House of M*) so I didn't think I would get to do another one, you know? But I said, "Let's go for it."

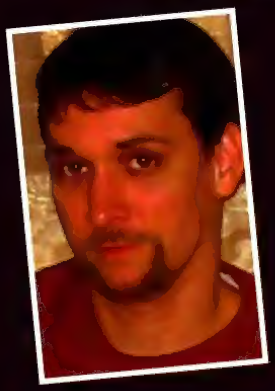
SPOTLIGHT: This is the kind of crossover event that scales very well to all the other titles.

BRIAN: Yeah. Because the Avengers had covered so much ground in the Marvel Universe, I thought I'd just do the Skrull invasion there, thinking that it would be my "Big Avengers Thing." But Marvel was like, "No, you've got a big thing here. If the Skrulls invade to the level you say, then you've got to go nuts."

SPOTLIGHT: And so we have the 2008 version of the *Civil War* crossover.

BRIAN: *Civil War* was lightning in a bottle. I was involved with that, and I was very aware that it was lightning in a bottle. I just really didn't want *Secret Invasion* to tank and I'm thrilled that it hasn't. There's just so much stuff that's not in my control.

PORTRAIT OF A SECRET INVASION WITH GREG HORN



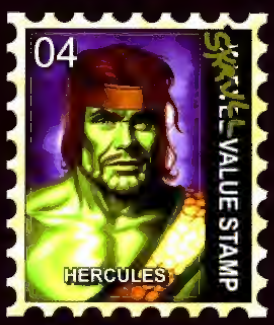
Artist Greg Horn

In the spirit of Arthur Suydam's revolutionary zombie-fied versions of classic Marvel covers, Marvel saw a grand opportunity to promote the launch of *Secret Invasion* with a series of portraits commemorating the transformation of the Marvel heroes we know and love into the shape-shifting menaces, the Skrulls! To do that, they brought on artist Greg Horn, well-known cover artist and all around nice guy (assuming he's not also a Skrull!) The promotion was a big success, and *Spotlight* loved his work on these promo images so much we hit him up for inside dirt on the process behind their creation. Our crack team of designers also converted them into a new series of Marvel Value Stamps! We checked with the United States Postmaster General and were informed that these stamps are not "legal tender," but perhaps when the Skrull invasion is complete, our new Skrull overlords will see things differently! Until then, thanks Greg for delivering these awesome images and tell us more about them!

Did you get assigned all these portraits or did you get to lobby for any characters to be included?

Most of the characters were assigned by my buds at Marvel Comics. At First, they asked me to do just ten Skrulls: Hercules, Wolverine, Dark Phoenix, Hawkeye, Spider-Woman, Luke Cage, Iron Man, Storm, Spider-Man, and Captain America. Considering recent storylines, the last two Skrulls really gave me pause! I wrote to my editor at Marvel: "Are you guys sure you want to do these last two? People are going to riot in the freakin' streets when they see what you have done!" ...I don't think they cared much.

The Skrull images were to be released one after the other on Marvel.com as part of their "Who do you trust?" teasers. The deadline for all ten pieces of art was only 15 days!!! Typically, I spend about 4-5 days on a cover, so these images had to be completed very quickly at 1.5 days per painting. There was no time to waste, so I got started on the characters with the idea that they would get more "Skrully" as I went on; Hercules, Wolverine, and Hawkeye lean more towards the human side of the Hero/Skrull Hybrid. (In fact, some girls think Hercules/Skrull is "hot".) By the



You come up with the idea and it kind of takes on a life of it's own, and God bless it, it turns into this other thing. I feel myself just overwhelmed with gratitude towards my peers, towards my collaborators, my editors, and the people who bought the book, man. They just dove in and they're just enjoying the crap out of it. Everyday I wake up, there's emails and posts on the MySpace page or on the boards just talking about Skrulls, making Skrull jokes, wondering who is a Skrull. It's crazy.

SPOTLIGHT: Going back to the origins of this idea, do you remember the moment when you thought, "Hmmm…Skrulls!?"

BRIAN: Yeah. I remember I was working on *Alias* and I had just finished doing something similar with the Purple Man. [*A semi-obscure villain foil from Daredevil who could manipulate the actions of others — Ed.*] And by that I mean, taking a character like the Purple Man that is not always treated as seriously and using them in an appropriately sinister way. When I was a kid reading about Purple Man, I was going "Man, that is scary as hell!" I mean, if you really used the Purple Man seriously, that would be the scariest thing you ever saw!

So I've thought that about the Skrulls as well, and they've come close a couple of times in other stories like the Kree/Skrull War, and the mythology of them has been built up over the years. But instead of looking at them with their little ray guns, let's go back to their *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* origin and really get in there.

We're in a post-Cold War world, but now post-9/11, there's a different kind of fear in the world. We get on a plane we don't know who's who. You know, you can't help it. And I thought

time I got to Storm and Iron Man they are starting to look really freaky and unpleasant!

As I was finishing up the first batch, I decided to lobby for Nick Fury (at the behest of one of my forum members and also because I think Fury has been acting shady the last couple of years). And the next thing you know, there are four more Skrulls: Invisible Woman, YellowJacket, Doctor Doom, and Nick Fury! These last four are *really* creepy looking. Spider-Man and Captain America were held back as the last two reveals given out to mainstream media like Entertainment Weekly, etc.

Which characters did you want to do that you weren't able to do?

I wanted to do a Skrull version of Aunt May and Jarvis, but some fool stopped me! I requested Emma Frost near the end, but I think they were all Skrulled-out by that time! At the beginning we were actually going to do the original, non-Dark Phoenix and the black costumed Spider-Man, but those were axed before we officially started.

Which of these is your favorite and why?

Invisible Woman and Captain America tie as my favorites. Some people are actually repulsed when they see Sue for the first time; she is really disturbing to look at, and people will actually lean back away from the artwork. That means I did my job! Cap is great too because he is the only one that is a full-on Skrull, and I decided to put his hands on his head like maybe the Skrull just can't stand being such a goodie two shoes...it looks like he is having a real mental dilemma!

GOOD, THAT MEANS THEY'RE ALL SKRULLS AND THEY WERE JUST--
DON'T MEAN NOTHIN'. NOTHIN' AT ALL.
EVERYONE SCATTERED.
DINOSAURS WILL DO THAT.
I JUST CAN'T SEE THE ANGLE. WHAT'S THE SKRULL PLAN?
THEY GOT US ALL STUCK DOWN HERE, FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES, FIGHTING EACH OTHER.
FIGHTING A WAR WHEN WE CAN'T TRUST THE SOLDIER NEXT TO US.
WHY DON'T THEY JUST NUKE US OR-- OR SPACE-RAY US-- THEY HATE US SO MUCH?

"...instead of looking at them with their little ray guns, let's go back to their *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* origin and really get in there."

— Brian Bendis on revisiting the skrulls

there was something there. And I did, I said to Tom Brevoort, our editor, we need to use the Skrulls, but not in the normal way, not the way they've been done before. And I mentioned *Star Trek*, about how they recast the Klingons. In the TV show they were goofy, but in the movies they were scarier. This was pre-*Battlestar Galatica*, but they're definitely in the same mindset with how they treat their Cylons

We kind of had to decide early on who the Skrulls were impersonating and kind of keep it to ourselves. Some of the artists we didn't even tell just because this kind of thing leaks so fast. They tell their girlfriend, the girlfriend says something at a party and *boom*, it's out there and once it's out there, it's all ruined. It's been about four and a half years we've been working on this.

SPOTLIGHT: Was Spider-Woman your first targeted Skrull?

BRIAN: Yeah. That was locked down. It was funny because no one (at Marvel) cared about her. That is what got her on the Avengers, really, back when I first pitched *Avengers* and Mark Millar and I were going back and forth on who would be writing it. It was like Spider-Man and Wolverine and all these all-stars. And then there's Spider-Woman. I remember everyone going, "Nobody cares about her!" And I'm like, "Oh I've got something cool planned for her." (*Laughter.*) It had to be a character that wasn't tied to a lot of stuff, that kind of thing.

SPOTLIGHT: Absolutely. She's the kind of character whose lack of history and usage would be an asset for the narrative. You know, I think people are going to really enjoy going back and rereading all this stuff now, you know?

BRIAN: Yeah, two things are going on here that I'm immensely proud of. First, the rereading factor. I get very neurotic about people buying the books, overly so, and this is a grand opportunity for me to feel better about that by giving you something to reread. Not for shits and giggles. You can really reread it now with a different context. For me personally, that just makes me feel better about people buying the books.
And second, the way these tie-ins are being handled, how they're flipping over all of the cards: like in *New Avengers* and *Mighty Avengers*, telling the stories from so many different angles by the author of the event itself is genuinely unique and I can't think of any time it's ever been done before. If you can, please tell me! I'd love to read it. But I can't think of when that's

INSIDE THE INVASION

A SPOTLIGHT LOOK AT *SECRET INVASION* TIE-INS

The Incredible Hercules #116-120
Writers: Greg Pak and Fred Van Lente
Artist: Rafa Sandoval

WHAT IT IS

FRED VAN LENTE: "The epic Incredible Hercules *SI* tie-in starts with 'Sacred Invasion.' Given the Skrulls' religious motivations for their invasion of Earth, it seemed a perfect opportunity for the gods of Earth to get involved. If humanity is wiped out, whatever gods may truly be, they will disappear too. Athena Parthenos, Herc's sister and main adviser, convenes the Council of Godheads (last seen in the pages of *Thor*) and they choose to confront this threat by organizing a task force of Terran deities lead by Hercules. Herc's 'sidekick,' Amadeus Cho, immediately dubs the team "The God Squad"…to no one's amusement but his own."

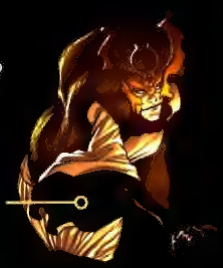
WHY IT'S COOL

FRED: "To save their kind, the God Squad sallies forth toward the realm of the Skrull Gods in a secret counter-offensive, a voyage fraught with adventure, perils and even some romance, all of which climaxes in the most mind-numbing battle ever seen in the pages of Marvel, with the fate of two worlds hanging in the balance. What else would you expect when two hordes of immeasurably powerful gods clash?"

WHO IS THE GOD SQUAD?

FRED: "The Gods of the North, South, East and West got to choose a member, along with the Elder Gods, and here's who they came up with:

SNOWBIRD (First appearance: *X-Men #120*):
She survived the destruction of Alpha Flight in the pages of *New Avengers*, but will her guilt spell her new team's downfall?



AMATSU-MIKABOSHI (First appearance: *Thor: Blood Oath #3*):
The Japanese god of darkness and deceit is responsible for the death of Herc's father, Zeus. Will the Prince of Power jeopardize the larger mission to take his vengeance?

DEMOGORGE THE GOD-EATER (First appearance: *Thor Annual #10*):
The first son of the Earth Goddess Gaea, Demogorge doesn't care whether the Earth Gods or the Skrull Gods win, since he will feast on the bodies of the loser. He's great fun at parties.

AJAK (First appearance: *Eternals (1976) #2*):
The only of the powerful Eternals to actually have been worshipped as a god, Ajak is more motivated by intra-Eternal conflicts that provide major hints to the direction of this summer's *Eternals* ongoing (shameless plug!)

been done. And coming up with a genuinely unique experience in major comics is always exciting and not easy to do. These things have been around for about a century now.

SPOTLIGHT: Were there any characters on your list that you really wanted that you had to give up on recasting as a Skrull?

BRIAN: There was a couple that I had locked in, but when the story came to its fruition, we actually didn't need them. I was very much of the "less is more" feeling, that the fewer Skrulls the better. And then when we got to them there was like one or two characters that I did have the ability to "Skrull out," but when we got there, I thought, "Well, they don't further the plot, they're just repeating beats from other characters."

You know you can plan this to death, but I knew there were certain characters that I couldn't do it to; it would just be ridiculous to even try.

SPOTLIGHT: I'd like to talk about a scene in the second issue of *SI* It's a masterfully executed scene and it goes into trying to figure out your sense of long-range planning on this. It's the scene with Clint Barton, in his guise as Ronin, seeing Mockingbird and trying to get a feel for if that's who she really is. The emotional context of that scene was amplified in a big, big way by the fact that Clint is hidden behind the Ronin mask, which is totally not familiar to Mockingbird. Ronin is somebody that she doesn't recognize, but behind the mask is the love of her life.

So it goes back to all the hubbub about Clint Barton forsaking his Hawkeye identity and taking on Ronin, and all the grief you got about that. If Clint had been in his Hawkeye costume, that emotional context wouldn't have been as killer as it was. Was that one of the main factors behind having Clint become Ronin, so you could lay the groundwork for this very scene in Secret Invasion? I mean, this was a cornerstone scene. It seems like something you would have wanted to plan for.

BRIAN: You know…you get to that scene and it's decision time. We had that scene planned for a very long time and when you sit down to write it, you have Mockingbird and Clint, and that mask is very, very interesting. That mask…and in a world *full* of masks, a mask being interesting is really exciting. Clint not taking off the mask until the moment that he does, that mask, what it represents, all that…it's just *great* business dramatically.

SPOTLIGHT: Kudos on a great scene. Took me back to my *West Coast Avengers* days, big time! The other character that I think you've created isn't really a character at all, but it's this sense of paranoia that you've built up and been milking for so long and is now omnipresent in the Secret Invasion titles. It's that invisible character in the room. For instance, you can see in *SI #2* in the simple exchange between Ms. Marvel and Iron Man when they reach that Savage Land laboratory. Tony says to leave him behind and Carol doesn't want to let him out of her sight. It's this paranoia that informs

THE INVASION IS ON! Super-Skrulls spill out of their ship! (Say that ten times fast…and hope you make it out alive! Art from *SI #2*.)

Black Panther #39-41

Writer: Jason Aaron
Artist: Jefte Palo

INSIDE THE INVASION

WHAT IT IS

JASON AARON: "It's all out war in Wakanda. An army of Skrulls has arrived, looking to take control of the country's Vibranium, but the Black Panther is ready for anything, leading to a full-scale ground war on the plains of Africa."

WHY IT'S COOL

JASON: "How about a Super-Skrull with the powers of Marvel's baddest street fighters? He's got a Wolverine hand, an Iron Fist hand and a Bullseye logo on his forehead. That's cool, right?"

every decision the characters are making.

BRIAN: I am constantly reminding the artists about how impossible these situations are and how there may be no right answer and how heavy every decision is that is being made. Even in the scene just before the Mockingbird scene, where Luke and Wolverine are talking it out, even the decision to *have* that conversation is a heavy thing. It's total paranoia and hopefully the idea is that it will build into some of the larger set pieces that are coming up, so it will really feel like letting off steam in a big, big way. When you've been dealing with this level of crazy, it's really gotta be a gratifying fight scene when you go from battle to battle.

SPOTLIGHT: That battle scene with the Super-Skrulls in *Secret Invasion #2-3* was nuts! I saw the composite Super-Skrulls I never would have dreamed of seeing!

BRIAN: That's actually something that's been in my head for a while. Frank Cho was someone who was involved with some behind the scene stuff there. And he had some images in his head that he was very generous to let us take as well, but I took it even further with these different power sets that you gotta get an extra handbook to even appreciate. Or be a nerd on the level of us! (*Laughter.*)

SPOTLIGHT: Right. I liked the Eternals Super-Skrull. He was my favorite.

BRIAN: I'm a big fan of the Power Pack one. (*Laughter.*)

SPOTLIGHT: There's another big event inside *Secret Invasion* and that is the return of Nick Fury, who has been on the sidelines since *Secret War*. How long have you been hankering to unleash him back onto the scene?

BRIAN: Oh, probably from the minute we put him in the box! We put him away for a couple of good reasons, from *Secret War* until now. At the time that we put him away, he was launching plot after after plot after plot, and it was really getting to be a bit much. So it was a good idea to put him away, but always with the feeling that he'd come back. But when he comes back, it's got to be with a legitimate new agenda.

BLACK AND WHITE AND FURY ALL OVER: The return of Nick Fury, in the climactic scene of *Secret Invasion* #3. This is uncolored preview art by Leinil Francis Yu.

SPOTLIGHT: Wiping out Skrulls is definitely a legitimate agenda! One of the things that'll be a fun game for people to play is, "When did our favorite heroes get kidnapped?"

BRIAN: Well that's funny you mentioned that because you're going to find out *exactly* those moments. There are issues of *New Avengers* and *Mighty Avengers* dedicated very specifically to the exact moment that Spider-Woman got switched out. And we look back at when she told Captain America her new origin, in *New Avengers #14-15*, and we get to see exactly what was true and what was not true. And then there's a whole issue dedicated to Hank Pym where we get to find out what happened with him.

SPOTLIGHT: Those are some nice teasers!

BRIAN: I'll give you a perfect example of something I'm very excited about. You know that scene in *Mighty Avengers* where Hank gave Janet a new serum? Well you didn't know he was a Skrull when he did that. Go back and read it, and now you know he's a Skrull…that's the scariest thing that could happen in the whole book. It was just a cute little scene between a couple of characters that used to be married, but now there's a lot more going on there.

You can say that again! SECRET INVASION continues to surprise readers in its third issue, on sale the same day this issue of Marvel Spotlight hits stands…so go get it before it sells out!

ON THE FR

After Restoring Captain Marvel And Ms. Marvel To Prominence, Writer Brian Reed Finds Himself On The Front Line Of A Secret Invasion

By DUGAN TRODGLEN

For a guy who has only been writing comic books for a few years (he got his start co-writing the *Ultimate Spider-Man* video game with Brian Michael Bendis), Brian Reed has firmly established himself within the Marvel Universe. He is in effect riding shotgun with Bendis for the thrill ride that is *Secret Invasion*, writing (or having written) no less than five titles that tie-in to the event. He co-wrote (with Bendis again) *New Avengers: The Illuminati*, one of the springboards into *Secret Invasion*. He writes *Ms. Marvel* and wrote *Captain Marvel*, two early "Infiltration" books, and has two upcoming series, *Secret Invasion: Front Line* and *Secret Invasion: Spider-Man*, which look at the event through unique perspectives. With all of that, it seemed only appropriate for *Spotlight* to pick his brain on *Secret Invasion*, Brian Reed-style!

Writer Brian Reed

SPOTLIGHT: Brian, you have a ton of *Secret Invasion* stories, both in the past and upcoming! Your first *Secret Invasion*-related title was the *New Avengers: The Illuminati* series you wrote with Brian Michael Bendis. That series featured the secret cabal of Marvel Universe heavy hitters (with Iron Man in the presumptive lead). They gathered together when huge universe-shattering events took place in order to take stock of what happened and provide some covert follow-up, you might say. In the first issue, they have an encounter with the Skrulls, and in the final issue Black Bolt is revealed to be a Skrull himself in a major "Infiltration" tie-in. When you and Bendis were cooking up *Illuminati*, was being a lead-in to *SI* always part of the plan for that final issue?

BRIAN: Oh, no. We had originally concocted a completely different fifth issue. We were going to "out" the Illuminati to everyone. They were going to do something and it was going to screw up and everyone in the world would see them for exactly what they were. We were going to pull the rug out from under them, break their lives, and then go home and laugh. *(Laughter.)*

As time went on, and partially because of art delays, we realized we had done the first issue with the Skrulls and not resolved it. We had not really planned on resolving any of the issues, really. They were going to be these little one-shot snapshot stories rather than one long story. At first I was thinking about trying to tie them all together in the fifth issue — the Skrulls, the Infinity Gems, the Beyonder. It was going to be the craziest Marvel fanboy nerd-fest ever! *(Laughter.)* Fortunately Bendis was sober enough to say, "No, let's not!" But when we realized when the fifth issue was coming out, right when the *Secret Invasion: The Infiltration* stuff was happening, someone suggested, "Why don't we use this as a *Secret Invasion* setup?" I think it was the best ending we could have had for it because it made the whole five issues feel like one piece rather than five separate pieces.

> ***"We had originally concocted a completely different fifth issue... We were going to pull the rug out from under them, break their lives, and then go home and laugh."***
>
> – Writer Brian Reed on *New Avengers: The Illuminati*.

SPOTLIGHT: It also shed new light on the first issue. All of a sudden that issue looked like it tied in. Was that intended from the beginning?

BRIAN: That first issue was all setup for *Secret Invasion*. We knew that from the start, and he builds on that in the *SI* series. It was funny: we had it totally planned in the first issue, but had no thought that we would also be using the fifth as well.

SPOTLIGHT: You have several more *SI*-related titles: *Captain*

FRONT LINES

***Marvel, Ms. Marvel, Secret Invasion: Front Line* and *Secret Invasion: Spider-Man*. It seems like after Bendis, you are almost the second lead when it comes to *SI*. Have you been involved with concocting the major strokes of the story?**

BRIAN: No. He had this story at least generally in place before I was even writing comics! When I first got to know him we were writing the *Ultimate Spider-Man* game together. I remember at that time he was just starting to write *House of M*. He told me then about upcoming Avengers events. He described *Secret Invasion* to me in the very loosest terms. It was at least four years ago. He had laid most of the groundwork. My deal with *Front Line*, and with *Captain Marvel* to some extent, was me saying to Marvel, "Okay, he's doing the big explosive monster movie. I want to do the ground level movie." The comparison a friend of mine made was that Bendis is making *Godzilla* and that I'm making *Cloverfield*. Just imagine if they were released side-by-side and were both about the same monster. That's what we're doing.

MARVEL-OUS COMEBACKS: Brian Reed has been on top of the

SPOTLIGHT: You've been writing *Ms. Marvel* for over two years now, and as you say, *Secret Invasion's* roots predate that, so you knew it was coming when you launched the book. Have seeds been planted throughout the title's run as they have during *New Avengers*?

BRIAN: Yup! As we've now seen, the pseudo-boyfriend character William Wagner — there's always been this mystery about who he is — is in fact a Kree soldier who has been sent to Earth to stop this invasion. He didn't succeed for reasons yet to be revealed, but in *Ms. Marvel* #25 we revealed him to be a Kree and we killed him off. The Skrulls were using Ms. Marvel to get to him, which is why there was a second Ms. Marvel running around. That's been planned since William's first appearance.

SPOTLIGHT: As you said, the Skrulls put a phony Ms. Marvel in place without actually replacing the original. She was out of the country, and the Skrull version was being used for a single mission. How did you decide to play out the dynamic of two Carol Danvers?

BRIAN: All of *Ms. Marvel* #26 is about the two Ms. Marvels.

Everybody knows one of them is a Skrull, and we wanted to show how Carol outwits this thing to prove who she is. The obvious thing right there is to do a riff on *The Fugitive* have her be on the run with her own Lightning Strike team chasing her. I thought it would be a great curveball to have her turn herself in. (*Laughter.*) "Fine, take me! I know I'm me and I know she's not, so let's do this!"

SPOTLIGHT: You really like to make things difficult for Carol don't you?

BRIAN: Well, we always hurt the ones we love! (*Laughter.*) There are times when I joke with my wife that I feel completely guilty for what I just did to Ms. Marvel She puts food on our table, and I do these things to her!

> ***"There are times when I joke with my wife that I feel completely guilty for what I just did to Ms. Marvel. She puts food on our table, and I do these things to her!"***
>
> – Reed on the emotional turmoil in Carol Danvers' monthly book.

SPOTLIGHT: Moving on to *Captain Marvel*, it was revealed that he is a Skrull replacement "gone wrong." He was not quite fully programmed when he ended up in the negative zone as he was found in *Civil War: The Return*. He ends up in a unique position, both within the story and as a comic book character in general, as he thinks like a Kree, the sworn enemy of the Skrulls!

BRIAN: He's been a malfunctioning weapon. The Charles Le Brun painting was supposed to be a trigger to awaken his memory of being a Skrull infiltrator, but the programming was never completed and he found himself just staring at it for reasons he couldn't fathom.

After he is finally made to realize who he is, he has a big moment where he says, "My body may be a Skrull body but my mind is Captain Marvel. What does that make me?" It makes him what he wants to be, and he wants to be Captain Marvel. He figures he can have the best of both worlds during the actual invasion by attacking the Thunderbolts. Since they are actually "bad guys" he decides he can handle taking them out – something the Skrulls want – while he decides what to do next.

SPOTLIGHT: How do you write a series starring a character where there was so much about him yet to be revealed?

BRIAN: It was tricky but I realized that the best way to do it was to fool him at the same time as the audience. If he had known all along that he was a Skrull, there would have been a lot of cheating going on. Letting him be as in the dark as we all are just let me write Captain Marvel. And having that reveal in issue five let his discovery happen along with the audience's discovery.

SPOTLIGHT: And you'll be following up your *Captain Marvel* series in the pages of *Secret Invasion: Who Do You Trust*, correct?

BRIAN: Yes. It's great because Lee Weeks joins me on it for a story called "Farewell" and it's a chance for us to say goodbye to the character. It gets us from *Captain Marvel* #5 to *Secret Invasion* #1.

SPOTLIGHT: How do you view the Kree's role overall in *Secret Invasion*?

Thunderbolts #122-125

Writer: Christos Gage
Artist: Fernando Blanco

WHAT IT IS

CHRISTOS GAGE: "The Thunderbolts battle Captain Marvel...but who's the good guy and who's the bad guy? Then, all that stands between our nation's capital and the Skrulls is our team of villains, miscreants and psychos...can they become the heroes they've been pretending to be, or is the greatest enemy within? Finally, a major change in the status quo of the Thunderbolts...and the Marvel Universe itself!"

WHY IT'S COOL

CHRISTOS: "We start out with Captain Marvel — who was recently revealed as a Skrull — fighting the Thunderbolts. But wait — he may be a Skrull, but he's also determined to carry on the real Captain Marvel's heroic legacy! So who's the villain here? After that, we see Norman Osborn lead the Thunderbolts in a brutal battle that will pull no punches as they fight the Skrull armada and a Super-Skrull with the powers of the original T-Bolts! And just a word to the wise, where we go from there is something Marvel fans will be talking about for a long, long time..."

ENEMIES OF THE ILLUMINATI: Brians Bendis and Reed gave [illegible] (Art from New Avengers: The Illuminati #1-5 by Jim Cheung.)

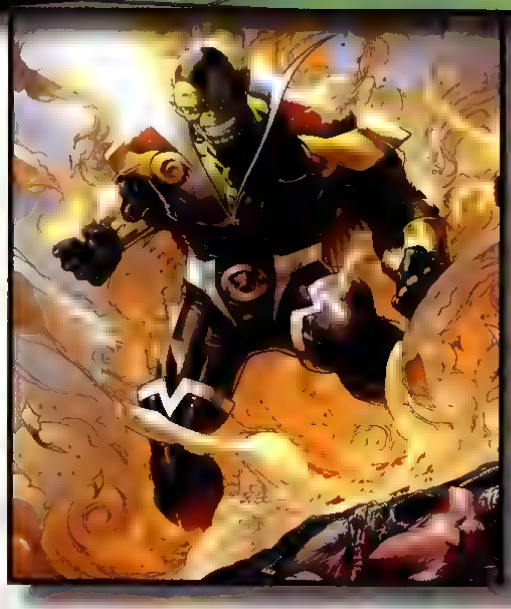
BRIAN: They've had a lot of crap going on in *Annihilation: Conquest*. They knew the invasion was a possibility but they didn't entirely believe it, which is why they sent just the one guy, William Wagner, to Earth. And as I mention in *Captain Marvel*, they've been sealed away thanks to *Annihilation: Conquest* and they haven't been able to get involved, but their involvement is coming.

SPOTLIGHT: The Front Line concept was established during *Civil War* by Paul Jenkins and he continued it with *World War Hulk: Front Line*. The original idea was based around an alternative newspaper and reporters Sally Floyd and the venerable Ben Urich. You have taken over *Front Line* for *Secret Invasion*, and changed the approach. What has changed and what has remained in *Front Line*?

BRIAN: What has remained the same is we still have Ben Urich and he still works for Front Line What has changed is everything else!

SPOTLIGHT: So Sally Floyd is not even involved.

BRIAN: She's not there and I'm not mentioning her. She's still out there in the Marvel Universe somewhere



Mostly what I pitched to editor Tom Brevoort was, "Let's take the title seriously. Not just as the name of the newspaper but let's show the front line of the invasion. This is about the average people in the Marvel Universe dealing with this. Ben Urich is the most exceptional guy here, and he's exceptional because he's had dealings with super heroes before. Other than that the series looks at regular people it's an emergency room doctor; it's a guy who works at a design firm and his daughter, it's a taxi driver; it's a beat cop

The first thing I'm trying to get across to the reader is that you and I see things on TV every night about war, but if something in our neighborhood blew up tomorrow, the reaction we'd have would be completely different. That's what it's like to live in the Marvel U You know the Fantastic

New Warriors #14-15

Writer: Kevin Grevioux
Artist: Koi Turnbull

WHAT IT IS

It's *new* New Warriors vs. old New Warriors as tensions flair over who might be a Skrull! The old team thinks Night Thrasher just might be, while he hopes the team that was killed in Civil War might have been Skrull replacements!

WHY IT'S COOL

EDITOR DANIEL KETCHUM:
"Regular readers will finally get to see some of the trust issues come to a head, specifically those involving Wondra and Night Thrasher."

Punisher War Journal #24-25

Writer: Matt Fraction
Artist: TBA

WHAT IT IS

MATT FRACTION: "Taking advantage of the apocalyptic Secret Invasion as a chaotic backdrop, Clarke decides to assassinate Tony Stark, for all of his crimes. Whose side will Frank be on?"

WHY IT'S COOL

MATT: "All the plot threads, conflicts, resentments, secrets, hatred, anger and revenge that've been simmering since the first issue come to an end-of-the-world boil. And all of it leads into the face-melting, brain-bashing, explosion-making, epic-to-be, KING FRANK."

Four and the X-Men and Spider-Man are out there, but you don't really see them Most people go their whole lives, even in Manhattan, and never see Spider-Man But if you're walking down the street one day and Doctor Octopus comes through that wall and starts throwing cars at Spider-Man, you have a whole new perspective about superhumans. I really wanted to get that across and remind people that we're desensitized to these super heroes, but the denizens of the Marvel Universe are not.

Then you add to that the idea of "What is it like to see that alien ship come down for people who can't stand and fight?" It is run or die time. That's the story I really wanted to tell. We saw this sort of thing in *Marvels* and I hate to compare my work to that, because it makes me look like an ass. (*Laughter.*) But it's something I don't think we've seen enough of. It's a reminder that these people who you read about every month — there's something *amazing* there to the average person whose lives they impact.

SPOTLIGHT: It sounds like a good application of the *Front Line* brand even without as much reliance on the newspaper.

BRIAN: We do open up with Ben doing a newspaper story. He's doing a story on gang violence and following up on some of the threads from *New Avengers*, where The Hood is making a play on the city. So we're seeing it from Ben's point of view. He knows there's a guy named The Hood, and he knows there's a lot of gang violence. He's not into, "Oh, and it's a magic hood, and he has super-powers!" He doesn't really know about that or care about that. What he is interested in is the effect on the city. Then, when the invasion starts, everybody's day, which was going in one direction, is suddenly smacked off the rails, and that's just fun.

SPOTLIGHT: Ben Urich is a popular character among writers. How have you enjoyed working with him?

BRIAN: Oh, I love Ben. I used to read *Daredevil* for Ben, not for Daredevil. He has been a favorite character of mine forever and I wanted to use him in *Captain Marvel* but I came up with a plot for the reporter character that wasn't going to work with Ben. So with that not working out, and finding out Paul was unavailable for *Front Line*, that was the whole reason behind me saying, "Please let me do it!" It was a chance to hang out with Ben for five months.

SPOTLIGHT: Finally, we have *Secret Invasion: Spider-Man* upcoming. What is the basis of this tie-in limited series?

BRIAN: My joke name for the project, which I'd love to actually use, is "The Amazing Spider-Man: Brand New Secret Invasion!" (*Laughter.*) Because what it's really

BRAND NEW SKRULL: Fans of *Amazing Spider-Man* hit the "[illegible]" in the first issue of [illegible]-Man! Enjoy this black-and-white preview art by Marco Santucci!

about is all of the characters that came in with the "Brand New Day" relaunch finding themselves in the middle of the invasion. What's funny is that I'm writing *Front Line*, which is this deadly serious, honest look at an average person in the middle of all this craziness. Then I turn around and write this Spider-Man thing, which is a thrilling, super-hero adventure.

SPOTLIGHT: And still based on people without super-powers?

BRIAN: Still based on people without super-powers, but people are used to that world. They're used to Spider-Man and Green Goblin having fistfights in their office. The Daily Bugle people are used to this, and that's why I didn't want them in *Front Line*; I wanted Ben Urich to be the one guy with that sort of experience.

Secret Invasion: X-Men #1-4

Writer: Mike Carey
Artist: Cary Nord

WHAT IT IS

MIKE CAREY: "It's the X-Men in San Francisco mounting a rear-guard action against the Skrull invasion. An army of X-Men, essentially, with Cyclops as their general, trying to keep the Skrull invasion force tied down and to find its vulnerable points before the West Coast falls and is subdued. In the end that means hard choices and moral compromises for everyone. War is dirty."

WHY IT'S COOL

MIKE: "Because it's a war story disguised as a superhero story — or rather, a war story with superheroes as the soldiers. It's got a dynamic all its own."

WHO MAKES THE CUT?

MIKE: "Everyone! The *Uncanny* and *Astonishing* cast, the Young and New X-Men, characters like Iceman, Cannonball, Husk, Northstar and Aurora who currently aren't on any team at all — and some other characters that I'm not even going to mention. We wanted this to be the pan-mutant liberation army: everyone's involved, and everyone gets to play a part in how the story plays out. It's the only way to do something like this, really. The epic scale is part of the point."

SPOTLIGHT: This series will be chiefly about the about the new supporting cast?

BRIAN: Yes, very much so. Jackpot is the big hero in this. We want to give her a little spotlight time. Spider-Man does make an appearance in the first issue, and it is one that I loved as soon as I wrote it, even though it wasn't in my pitch. (*Amazing Spider-Man* Editor) Steve Wacker loved it too!

SPOTLIGHT: It will be interesting to see the "Brand New Day" world brought squarely into the Marvel Universe, because it has started out in its own little corner.

BRIAN: That's a lot of the point of this. As far as I know *Ms. Marvel* #25 is the only comic that has referenced the events of "Brand New Day" when it mentioned that Jonah had had a heart attack. So we're telling folks that "Hey, this is not a bubble universe or a Mysterio trick, it's really here!"

SPOTLIGHT: And this series has a lighter tone, you said.

BRIAN: Our opening splash page is a car driven by Joe Robertson and it has Dexter Bennett, the owner of the "DB" in the passenger seat. In the back seat is O'Neil the cop and Betty Brant, and on top of the car is Jackpot holding on for dear life while a Super-Skrull with the power of the Sinister Six is chasing them. That is exactly the vibe of all three issues of this story.

Sounds like there's all kinds of fun in store from Brian Reed. We'll let him get back to work with many thanks for talking to us about his role in SECRET INVASION!

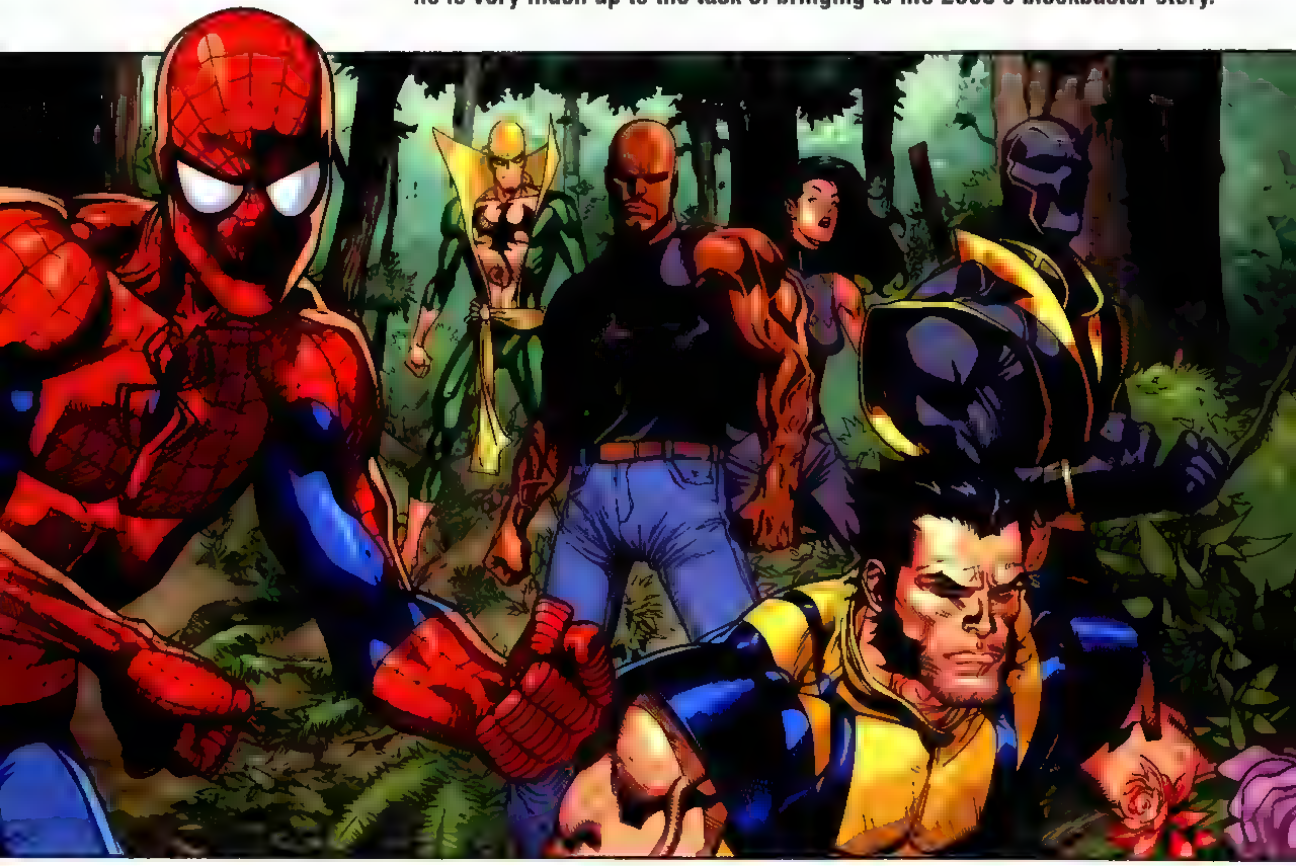
AN INVASION BY DESIGN

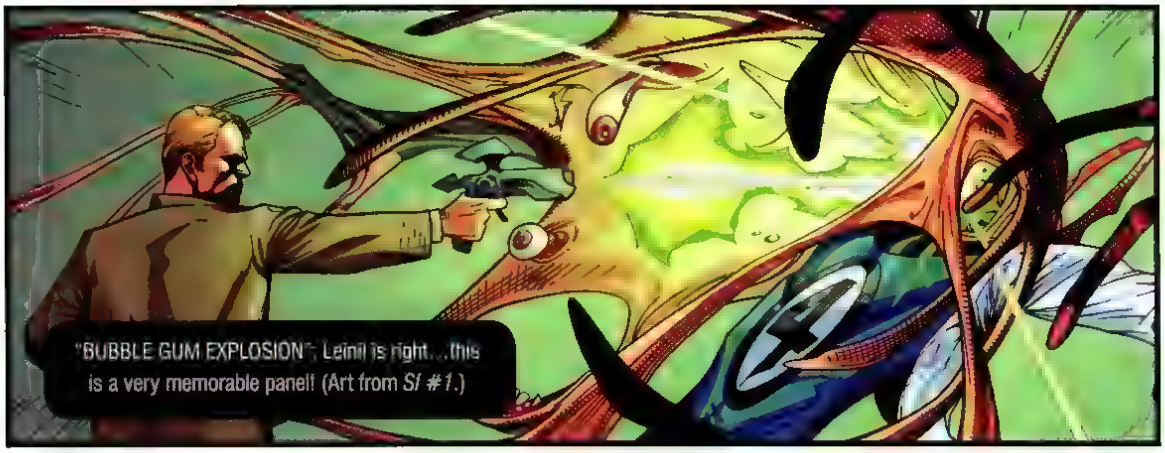
Leinil Francis Yu Draws Up Marvel's Skrull Infiltration

By Dugan Trodglen

Artist Leinil Francis Yu

Brian Michel Bendis first laid the groundwork for *Secret Invasion* all the way back in *New Avengers #1*, and ever since issue #26, of that series, artist Leinil Francis Yu has been right there with him. It was during Leinil's first story, "Revolution," that the conspiracy at the heart of Bendis' run was revealed and Leinil's indelible image of a dead Elektra, revealed in the form of a treacherous Skrull, would launch the early stages of the *Secret Invasion*. His art on *New Avengers*, full of creepy paranoia, leads perfectly into *Secret Invasion*, and his entire run of twelve issues, along with *SI*, seamlessly blend into one sprawling, compelling story. Now that he is full-tilt into drawing *Secret Invasion*, *Spotlight* spoke with Leinil and discovered he is very much up to the task of bringing to life 2008's blockbuster story.





"BUBBLE GUM EXPLOSION": Leinil is right...this is a very memorable panel! (Art from *SI #1*.)

SPOTLIGHT: You've been in the comic art business for quite a while. What is it like to have achieved the level of attention you have received over the last couple of years, culminating in *Secret Invasion*?

LEINIL: I've always had high profile projects but to be doing *the* main Marvel event was actually such a huge surprise for me and I never expected it. It's bizarre to be at the center of it all.

SPOTLIGHT: You had memorable runs on *Wolverine* and *X-Men* going on ten years ago. How would you say you have developed as an artist in that time?

LEINIL: I think I improved tremendously as I can't stand looking at my work prior to *New X-Men Annual 2001*. [*The now-classic collaboration with Grant Morrison...told horizontally! — Ed.*] I have learned a lot throughout the years in different aspects of drawing — from anatomy, faces, backgrounds and storytelling. This helps immensely in the pace of my output, which is very important in comics.

SPOTLIGHT: What have you observed about the evolution of the industry and Marvel specifically in that time?

LEINIL: Honestly, as an artist, I'm pretty much isolated, and if you stay away from the comic book forums, you wouldn't really know what goes on from the outside. And I'd say professionally, it's about the same. It has always been a pleasant experience for me from the start, and things couldn't be better for me being currently with Marvel. The readership had increased since I started out, so that is a great thing.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you work on *New Avengers #22*, the Luke Cage-centred *Civil War* tie-in, as a lead to your regular gig on the title?

LEINIL: I think that was my tryout of sorts (but I didn't know it then) and luckily Marvel and Brian Bendis liked what I did.

SPOTLIGHT: You've obviously reached a comfort level with Bendis after doing several issues of *New Avengers* with him. Have you noticed him adapting his scripts as he has gotten to know you as a creative partner?

LEINIL: I know Bendis does tailor his scripts to play up his artist's strengths and I thank him for that! That was quite obvious from the start. I was quite wary of being pigeonholed when we started out, but now, with *Secret Invasion*, I am pretty much drawing everything from space stations to the kitchen sink, so I'm happy.

SPOTLIGHT: When did you find out there were Skrulls among the Avengers? And what was your reaction?

"I NEVER ASK FOR PLOTS IN ADVANCE AS IT STRESSES ME OUT."

— ARTIST LEINIL YU

LEINIL: When Brian told me, he is always very generous with vital info about plot points. Honestly, I never saw the Elektra as a Skrull twist until I was about to draw it. Also, this may be a surprise to fans, but I never ask for plots in advance as it stresses me out. I also never read ahead that much as it would really weigh me down with too much information and anxiety over the immense workload ahead of me.

SPOTLIGHT: Paranoia had been a theme for virtually your entire run on *New Avengers* and into *Secret Invasion*, and you seem really good at visualizing it. It often feels like we are actually spying on the various scenes we are reading. Is this paranoia theme something you have in your mind as you have drawn this story and the issues leading up to it?

LEINIL: Definitely! My critics would argue that my characters look paranoid by default though! (*Laughter.*) Paranoia has been stressed by Bendis even in the midst of the *New Avengers* run. *Secret Invasion* has been in his mind for years now and everything is planned by the mighty Bendis.

SPOTLIGHT: Your first shot of the dead Elektra-Skrull is one of the most reproduced comic book images this side of Captain America lying dead on the courthouse stairs. Was it stressed

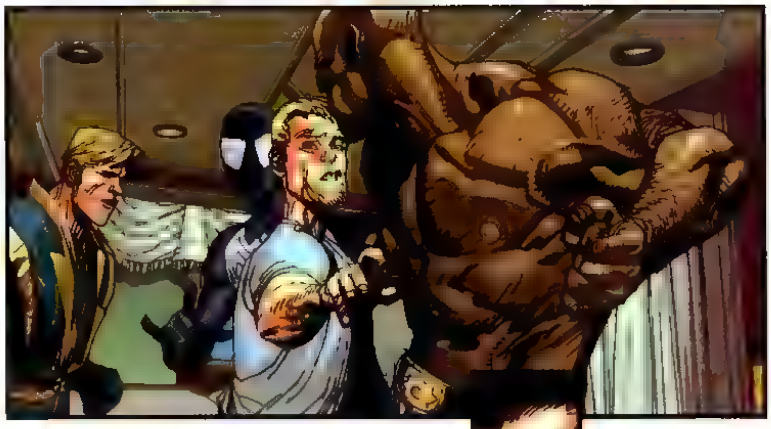
"I THINK WE CAME UP WITH PRETTY AWESOME LOOKING, SCARY AND UPDATED SKRULLS." —ARTIST LEINIL YU

to you that that splash had to be a home run?

LEINIL: Oh yes…and there is a happy accident with that issue. That shot was mighty important to Brian, and I drew the whole team staring at the dead-Elektra-Skrull. He wanted the impact shot on Elektra to be much greater and wanted me to zoom in on her and pretty much crop off the New Avengers. Luckily, he misnumbered the pages and only wrote 21 pages of script so adding the Elektra headshot was seamless. We now had two cool shots.

SPOTLIGHT: **How does it feel to be tabbed for the big crossover event of the summer? Exciting? Nerve-wracking?**

LEINIL: It is nerve-wracking, but I'm dealing with it quite well, I guess! I just didn't over-excite myself into anxiety and just treated it as just another project… only with a small twist: as if my life depended on it.



SPOTLIGHT: **You were asked to do a lot of design work on the Skrulls and their world. What went into your designs? How did you balance using what came before with making them new-looking and threatening?**

LEINIL: Honestly, Marvel has been very accommodating and open with my designs and I'm starting to think that if I added a red clown nose to one of the Skrulls, they wouldn't mind. Seriously, aside from the skull cap and the pointed shoulder blades, I've been running away with the designs. Video game and movie designs obviously creep in. And I think we came up with pretty awesome looking, scary and updated Skrulls.

SPOTLIGHT: **Are you comfortable with large casts? (You seem to be, by the way!) What are the tricks of pulling off books with tons of characters?**

PARANOIA: One or more of the Avengers is a Skrull…but all of them are paranoid! (Art from *New Avengers #33*.)

LEINIL: Thumbnailing! I've been drawing straight on the 11x17 boards for years and I only "learned" the benefits of thumbnailing on a smaller paper. More than half of the work is done when you've laid out the page, fixed all the anatomy and faces along with all the basic elements. Finishing it off on the 11x17 board is all about detailing and tedious line work.

I honestly couldn't pull this off a year or two ago when I didn't have my thumbnail process in hand. Hey, we always learn new things!

SPOTLIGHT: Bendis gave you some good leeway on the battle scenes. Is this something you enjoy? It must have been especially fun to choreograph the old-school Marvel characters against the current versions. Any particular individual duels you were jazzed about drawing?

LEINIL: Brian actually has great fight directions going on and I always try to put them in. This makes me rely on his directions too much though. There are a lot of cool matchups on issue #2 and I enjoyed all of them! It's awesome to see two Spideys go at it.

SPOTLIGHT: How about the Super-Skrulls? That could either be an artist's dream, to make amalgams of classic teams and heroes into Skrulls, or a nightmare of complexity. Which was it for you?

LEINIL: OK, it wasn't as easy as I thought. I wanted them to have a homogenized, militaristic look where they may have different elements from a variety of characters while still looking like they are in the same team. I'd try to be coming up with different designs for future issues to emphasize their large numbers.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you have to do a lot of research for reference on the various Super-Skrulls? Which was your favorite?

LEINIL: I did a lot of research on the different teams since images on the Super-Skrulls were not easy to come by. I think the most popular one was the Fantastic Four Super-Skrull and I had to come up with the rest. I loved the Sinister Six Skrull and my X-Men Skrull.

SPOTLIGHT: I think the shot of Reed Richards being shot by that disruptor gun will go down as a defining visual from the series. Was it tricky to make that just right?

LEINIL: Glad you liked it! Actually this is one of the *rare* occasions that I asked them if I could ad lib a little. The original plot asked me to draw him like a puddle, or what a human being would look like if he had no skeleton. I figured, why not go crazy and go all out? I think the Reed Richards bubble gum explosion is pretty memorable and was fun to do.

SPOTLIGHT: Are you ready for something smaller scale or do you want to ride the momentum to another sprawling comic book?

LEINIL: I'm ready for whatever Marvel will ask of me. A short run on a single character hero wouldn't hurt of course, but I also don't want to develop "rust." I want to maintain my current level of output and not slow down too much. Bring it on!

Great attitude, Leinil! Thanks for speaking with us. We can't wait to see what incredible visuals you have in store for us over the rest of SECRET INVASION!

INSIDE THE INVASION
Nova #16-18
Guardians of the Galaxy #4-6
Writers: Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning
Artists: Paul Pelletier (Guardians) and Wellinton Alves (Nova)
WHAT IT IS
DAN AND ANDY: "Nova's involvement with the Secret Invasion is thrust upon him when he — the last centurion of the Nova Corps — finds himself at the top of the Skrull's cosmic hit list. Things are made even more complicated when he is forced to team up with Super-Skrull, and the pair form an uneasy alliance as they battle their way to Earth both engaged on very personal missions.
The Guardians of the Galaxy get swept up in raging paranoia when a Skrull infiltration of their HQ, Knowhere (which happens to be the decapitated head of a Celestial) is discovered. During an emergency lock down of the base, the newly formed team comes under huge pressure and tensions flare and cracks in the squad develop. Can any of them be trusted? How far has the infiltration really gone? And what do the Skrulls want with the decapitated head of a Celestial?"
Cover to Nova #16, a Secret Invasion tie-in.
WHY IT'S COOL
Nova versus Skrulls, what's cooler than that? And he gets to return to Earth. Interesting things always seem to happen when Nova returns home.
Guardians is going to be one hell of a character piece with some great shocks and surprises. Both books come at the Secret Invasion from the other end of the telescope, each one starting in space and examining the effects such a crisis has in the cosmic arena."

ANARCHY IN THE UK

Paul Cornell Finds Captain Britain and Wisdom's MI:13 In A British Invasion!

By DUGAN TRODGLEN

The Skrulls are invading Earth, not just the United States. What happens when they set their sights for the Siege Perilous in England? Naturally, Britain's greatest heroes are there to protect it! May saw the start of *Captain Britain and MI:13*, a new ongoing series by British scribe Paul Cornell and artist Leonard Kirk. Their first adventure pits them against the invasion and puts this unique team together. Spinning somewhat out of a status quo Paul established in the swell MAX series *Wisdom* (starring Pete Wisdom), *CB&MI:13* looks to be full of high adventure and charismatic characters. The writer spoke to *Spotlight* about his first Marvel ongoing series and explains what MI:13 is all about.

SPOTLIGHT: *Captain Britain and MI:13* is a much more mainstream title than the MAX imprinted *Wisdom* was. (And it is unusual for a MAX title's happenings to become canon.) What do folks need to know about what you established in *Wisdom* that will be followed up on in *Captain Britain*?

PAUL: Nothing, really. The idea is that they can leap on with *Cap #1* without any prior knowledge. But it does add a little spice to know that Pete Wisdom works for the MI.13 branch of British Intelligence, which deals with the paranormal and the supernatural, and that his colleagues there include John the Skrull, a Skrull who chooses to look like John Lennon. Pete made a sacrifice at the end of *Wisdom*, doing a terrible thing to save the world, and he's still beating himself up about it. But neither that nor anything else will stop him doing his duty. Another member of his old team shows up in *Cap #2*, but her presence explains itself instantly. At the start of the Earth/Skrull War, MI:13 does what it's made to do: rounds up all the British heroes it can find and mounts a crucial mission against the Skrulls.

SPOTLIGHT: What about Captain Britain makes him a specifically British super hero, and what makes this series specifically British? (Aside from setting, how does it differ from an American-set comic?)

PAUL: I don't think it does. We're determined that this isn't going to be "that British book." It has a sense of place and setting big time, but it's universal, in that this is a big widescreen super-hero book that goes for your brain and heart as well as your gonads. We don't have that sense of "we're in a different genre because we're in Britain" that the (wonderful) old *Excalibur* did. We connect to the rest of the Marvel Universe. Cap, on the other hand, is all that's best about the British character (changeable and influenced by time and place as that is): he's determined, quietly passionate, and stubborn in defence, cares a lot but doesn't like to show it. He doesn't make big speeches: he does it in a few words and expects people to know.

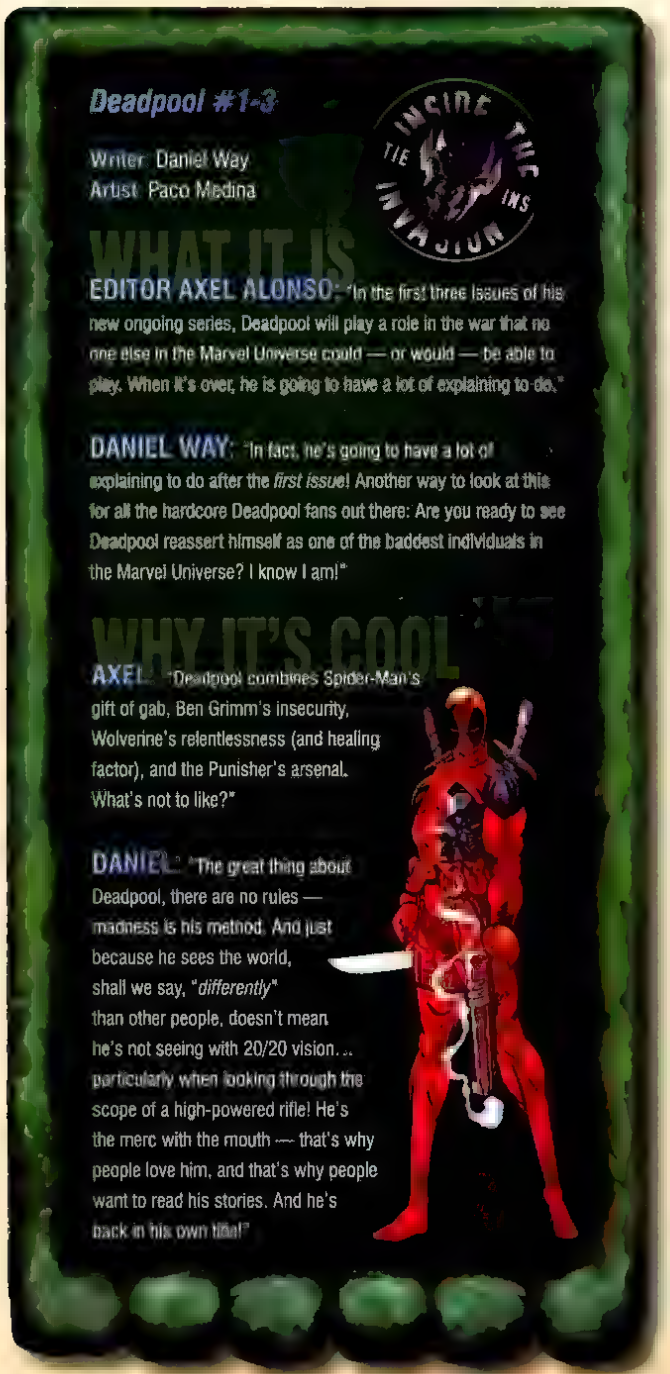
SPOTLIGHT: Go through the cast if you could, telling us a little about each member.

PAUL: Brian Braddock: Captain Britain has been to the barber now that it's the 21st century. (Yes, it probably still would be curly if he let it grow.) He misses his wife, but doesn't know how to mourn her, because he doesn't know if she's dead. He was deeply affected by the death of Steve Rogers. He hates having to fight in a war, but will. After it's over (after they've won, as he puts it), he wants to get back to representing again, to being the sort of hero Britain can look up to. He can do that and he will. But he's going to get his life messed with, big time. But Brian's strong, he's solid, and he's smart. He'll win through. (We're done with the amiable buffoon and the alcoholic now, right? I don't have to keep repeating that those versions won't be joining us.)

Pete Wisdom: Doing his duty, as always, keeping his wardrobe together, trying to get his team over the finishing line in a desperate first mission. And finding himself running into one of his exes almost straight away. I think Pete's a kind of British everyman, just doing the best he can, with a dose of irony that sometimes he gets and sometimes he doesn't. You know the young Michael Caine? A bit like that with a twinkle and a burden. You just want to tell him it's going to be okay and he can get some sleep now.

> **"Our team will stay on the front foot, and sometimes do it to the bad guys before they're aware that anything is being done."**
>
> – Writer Paul Cornell

Dane Whitman, the Black Knight: He found the Civil War just the last straw. He's had it up to here with the way the super hero thing ended up. His private life is a shambles. He's also carrying the burden of a sword that's always eager for the dark side, and that's his particular trust and cross to bear. He wants 'hero' back as much as Brian does. He's got to the point where…well, let's just say he's a brittle guy and when someone with knightly martial arts snaps, you tend to get…well, lovely pages of battle art, but it's not as fun as that from his point of view. He really needs a new squire, someone to reach out to him and help.


Deadpool #1-3
Writer: Daniel Way
Artist: Paco Medina
WHAT IT IS
EDITOR AXEL ALONSO: "In the first three issues of his new ongoing series, Deadpool will play a role in the war that no one else in the Marvel Universe could — or would — be able to play. When it's over, he is going to have a lot of explaining to do."
DANIEL WAY: "In fact, he's going to have a lot of explaining to do after the *first issue*! Another way to look at this for all the hardcore Deadpool fans out there: Are you ready to see Deadpool reassert himself as one of the baddest individuals in the Marvel Universe? I know I am!"
WHY IT'S COOL
AXEL: "Deadpool combines Spider-Man's gift of gab, Ben Grimm's insecurity, Wolverine's relentlessness (and healing factor), and the Punisher's arsenal. What's not to like?"
DANIEL: "The great thing about Deadpool, there are no rules — madness is his method. And just because he sees the world, shall we say, "*differently*" than other people, doesn't mean he's not seeing with 20/20 vision… particularly when looking through the scope of a high-powered rifle! He's the merc with the mouth — that's why people love him, and that's why people want to read his stories. And he's back in his own title!"

Jac Falsworth, Spitfire: She let something out of its box when the Skrulls invaded. She's doing great, she's the professional of many decades, grace under fire personified. But what happens when the fighting stops? She's a terrifying spectacle, frankly. If I were the Skrulls I'd be running. But she can catch up There's something about Spitfire as warrior that's really apt and satisfying, and her calm violence is very British. And I just love writing her accent and speech habits. She's the kind of British woman from the 1940s who'd refer to seeing her comrades cut down by bullets as "very tiresome." You might call it Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: we call it nostalgia.

John the Skrull: Disgusted, angry, yelling at the fascists who've taken over his culture and made being a Skrull a bad thing. It's that Lennon voice: sarcastic, certain, anti-authoritarian, fair and sometimes terribly selfish and rotten, but with a little boy charm at the heart of it, and disbelieving of its own grandeur. John is actually hugely gratified that the British government ends up trusting him so quickly, and fights passionately for his adopted homeland. He's not just there for *comedy* moments; he's there for *terrible* and *heartbreaking* comedy moments, lads.

Faiza Hussain: From Essex, and talks at a speed you wouldn't believe, with brackets within brackets, constantly surprising herself. She's been a fan of British super heroes ever since she can remember, but finds herself telling the Black Knight what she needs when he and a Skrull war machine gate crash the hospital where she works as a junior doctor. She ends up with super-powers that she doesn't know quite what to do with, and a heroic mission, and no idea what her code name could be. (We

might hold a competition.) She's our point of view character, our Kitty Pryde.

SPOTLIGHT: What is it like to launch a book with a big crossover? Does it make it trickier? Do you like that it gives readers an "in" for the book?

PAUL: Actually, it makes it way easy considering the nature of this book. We're made for a big war movie scenario, probably better than a lot of other books. We do it kind of like the *Lord of the Rings* movies, lots of different viewpoints and battles, all coming together. I'm hoping you can pick up this book and get into it right away.

SPOTLIGHT: What is John The Skrull's opinion of the invading Skrull armada?

PAUL: He despises them with a passion that only John can muster, they leave him spitting with rage, but in a very growly, witty way. He knows, from long experience, that Skrulls can fit in, that in a lot of ways that's what they're made for. He has no time at all for these militarists. He discovered foolishness and talent on Earth, and doesn't regard those things as slight.

SPOTLIGHT: The Skrulls seem intent on destroying the Siege Perilous. Why is that a target?

PAUL: (*Ahem.*) I think I should talk about something else here. (*Pause.*) My fantasy cricket team isn't doing so well today [*Fantasy cricket?!? LOL – Ed.*], but Vikram Solanki is just starting to put a big score together for Worcestershire, so you never know. (He just got out before I sent this off. Damn That's what happens when I'm not watching!) Actually, I'd love to do a scene of our team playing cricket, like the X-Men used to play baseball. And I want us to see Pete visit his tailor So I really should find a dramatic context for both those scenes. Sorry, what was the question?

SPOTLIGHT: Siege Perilous…oh, never mind! (*Laughter.*) How do these British heroes feel about being invaded by the Skrulls as opposed to how the US heroes, more accustomed to such a thing, react?

PAUL: It's quite a shock, because the British have always regarded super heroes and villains as more of a New York phenomenon. Indeed, there's a feeling of "why here?" Which is something we get into right away. But, being European, we're pretty good at the whole "look out, sudden violence is happening" thing.

SPOTLIGHT: Considering the series is about MI:13, can we look forward to more stories involving other-dimensional threats? In the case

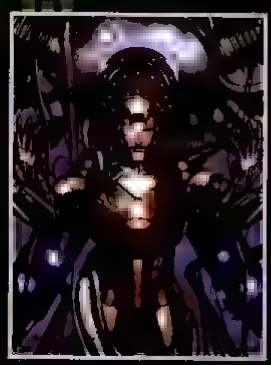
BLACK KNIGHT: [illegible]ian has never been badder than in the hands of Paul Cornell. (Art from *Captain Britain & MI:13 #1.*)

Iron Man: Director of SHIELD #33-35

Writer: Christos Gage
Artist: TBA

WHAT IT IS

CHRISTOS GAGE: "Iron Man fell to the Skrull attack in *Secret Invasion #1*. Find out what Tony Stark's contingency plan is for his defeat. (You knew he had to have one, right?)"



WHY IT'S COOL

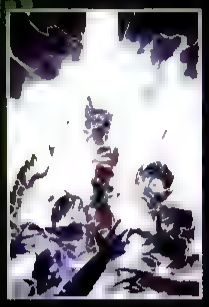
CHRISTOS GAGE: "It'll involve some familiar figures to Iron Man readers...that's all I can say for now!"

Secret Invasion: Thor #1-3

Writer: Matt Fraction
Artist: Doug Braithwaite

WHAT IT IS

MATT FRACTION:



"A warning shot fired at the heart of Asgard lets Thor and his fellow Asgardians know, in no uncertain terms, that the Skrull Invasion is coming. And the Skrulls make their message to Asgard clear: stay out of it. But since Thor has brought Asgard back so close to mankind... he's inadvertently made mankind a target."

WHY IT'S COOL

MATT: "Hammer. Skrull face. Relentless onslaught. Alien invasion. Did I mention the hammer? The hammer and the faces? Yeah. Yeah, you feel me."

of *Wisdom* this meant dimensions relating to Britain's mythic past. Will that continue?

PAUL: Not so much other-dimensional, we've done that now. We'll be going into the business of what one sets up a super-team for, and in this case it's a specific job, brought on by the events of the first four issues. Our team will stay on the front foot, and sometimes do it to the bad guys before they're aware that anything is being done.

SPOTLIGHT: Having written for *Doctor Who* and now dealing with the British Marvel heroes, is your attraction to British heroes based on familiarity, pride, or is there something else specific that draws you to them?

PAUL: I think one big word there would be "availability." But I very much grew up with these characters. I related to Captain America first, because I encountered him first, and he was my favorite because he was a soldier from World War II, like my Dad. And then Brian came along, and I really loved how pumped up and fast -paced his comics were, and how they pictured a version of Britain which, while not quite the real thing, chimed with the Marvel Universe. I think those early *Captain Britain Weekly* strips are Herb Trimpe's best work: there's something really appealing about his style there. And Chris Claremont gives Cap this confident, clipped and witty dialogue. I'm definitely using those as a touchstone, as well as the Black Knight run in the *Rampaging Hulk* magazine. And Delano, Moore, etc..

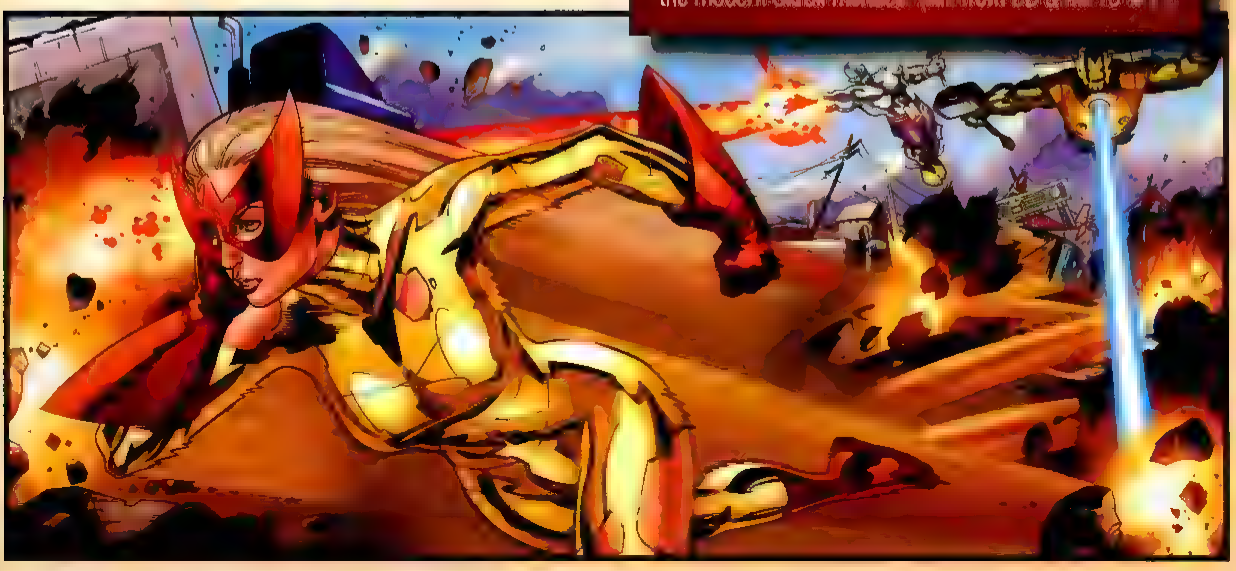
SPOTLIGHT: Any American heroes you'd like a crack at?

PAUL: The Dynamic Defenders. Always a favorite with me, from start to finish. The Six-Fingered Hand! The Devil Slayer! The Gargoyle! But I may be too late, what with *The Last Defenders* and all. I think that should be called *The Last Defenders Until We Give Them To Paul As An Ongoing*. (It's what the title is in the indicia, seriously.) Actually, I'm such a fan of the Marvel Universe in general that there's hardly anyone I wouldn't enjoy writing.

Our aim for *Captain Britain and MI:13* is to "bring hero back" as Naughty Nick Lowe, our editor, puts it, to have a team that's bound by friendship and loyalty as well as necessity, to engage passion in the audience. You know, we want cheering, we want tears, and we want emotional risk. I'd like us to have a big musical theme tune by John Williams that can be heard on the splash pages. Not too much to ask, is it?

Erm, I guess not? In any case we look forward to CAPTAIN BRITAIN AND MI.13's adventures both during Secret Invasion and well beyond. Cheers, Paul!

SPITFIRE VS. THE SKRULLS: A WWII hero lives to fight the modern Skrull menace! (art from CB & MI:13 #1)



THE KREE/SKRULL WAR REVISITED

THE ORIGINAL "SECRET INVASION"

Roy Thomas Puts Earth In The Middle Of An Intergalactic Clash And Tells A Timeless Marvel Tale!

By ALEX LEAR

NEARLY 40 YEARS BEFORE *SECRET INVASION*, THERE WAS THE KREE-SKRULL WAR.

This epic story spanned nine issues of the *Avengers* — #89-97 — and unfolded throughout most of 1971, placing two of the Marvel Universe's alien races in an intergalactic clash with Earth caught in the middle. Roy Thomas, who at the time was gradually alleviating the heavy scripting chores of then-writer Stan Lee, wrote the classic tale, while Neal Adams and Buscema brothers Sal and John each took the artist's reins along the way. • By 1971, the players that would make up the play were well in place — the Skrulls had been introduced by Stan and Jack Kirby a decade before in *Fantastic Four* #2, and the Kree followed with the introduction of the Sentry and Ronan the Accuser in *Fantastic Four* #64-65. Later that year saw the debut of Captain Marvel in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #12, and that Kree warrior — torn between his Kree loyalty and his growing fondness for the planet he was sent to destroy — would come to play a critical role in the Kree-Skrull War. • "It just seemed to me that the two of them ought to meet the same way the heroes meet all the time, and fight," Roy said of the two confrontational alien races. "And I was thinking, here are these two intergalactic races out there — each of them seemed to be interested in conquering the universe — and it seemed kind of unlikely that they had never been in touch." One key influence for Roy was *This Island Earth* by Raymond Jones, a book he had bought in the mid-1950s. That story involved the two battling interstellar races, Roy said, which "were more or less using Earth the way that the Americans and the Japanese used some of the Pacific islands during World War II. Anybody caught on those islands was kind of wiped out in the crossfire." • Roy gave a nod to that book in *Avengers* #93 with a tale entitled "This Beachhead Earth," which saw Neal Adams take over from Sal Buscema as artist. The war story kicked into high gear.

THE ADAMS INFLUENCE

While Sal had left most of the plotting to Roy in issues #89-92, Neal wanted to take more of a hand in that process, Roy explained. "As long as it didn't affect the money, that was fine with me," he said. "He was going to get paid for drawing, and we'd go out to lunch and talk it over for a little bit, and I'd tell him some things I wanted, and sometimes he'd tell me things that he'd kind of like to do, and so forth. We talked over the war … and if he had kind of wanted to veer away from it, and go somewhere else, I could have dropped it off and come back to it a little later."

Still, the war raged on with Roy's words and Neal's pencils. It was a partnership which Roy said came along at the right time, in terms of "both what he added and then what he would inspire in me. The next issue, we'd want to ratchet it up a little bit more."

Roy pointed out that Neal gave a 'cosmic scope' to the arc, a storyline which could be viewed as one bridge between Marvel's silver and bronze ages. "It's right there at the end of the Silver Age … and yet at the same time it was off in a different direction," Roy said. He added that Neal's take on the book was representative "both of the late Silver Age period and yet, at the same time, sort of the herald of a different kind of approach, of taking that Kirby dynamism and marrying it to a different kind of drama and a certain kind of realism…or something that *seemed* like realism.

EARLY BIRD EDITION
DAILY BUGLE
ALIEN PLOT TO CONQUER EARTH DISCLOSED!
TECHNICIANS TELL OF TOP-SECRET ALASKA BATTLE BETWEEN AVENGERS AND MYSTERIOUS RACE KNOWN ONLY AS "THE KREE".
PRESIDENT ACTS QUICKLY TO APPOINT SPECIAL COMMISSION
TECHNICIANS

THE INVASION IS ON! It's in the Daily Bugle so it has to be true!

"With the Marvel method that we used at that time, that meant that the art would have an influence on the writing beyond what it would have if I had been writing a full script, so it was sort of going back and forth," Roy continued. "And I think it was just a juxtaposition of fortunate circumstances that came in, and that's why it was so, maybe not tragic, but unfortunate that Neal wasn't able to do the last chapter, because that would have been ideal, but the story would have been pretty close to the same."

DEADLINE DILEMMAS

Problems with the dreaded deadline threw the execution of the story's conclusion in #97 into question. With #93, the page count of Marvel comics temporarily jumped to 34 pages and, Roy pointed out, Neal's time and talent was divided between *Avengers* and work for DC and other projects.

> ***"One key influence for Roy was* This Island Earth *by Raymond Jones, a book he had bought in the mid-1950s."***

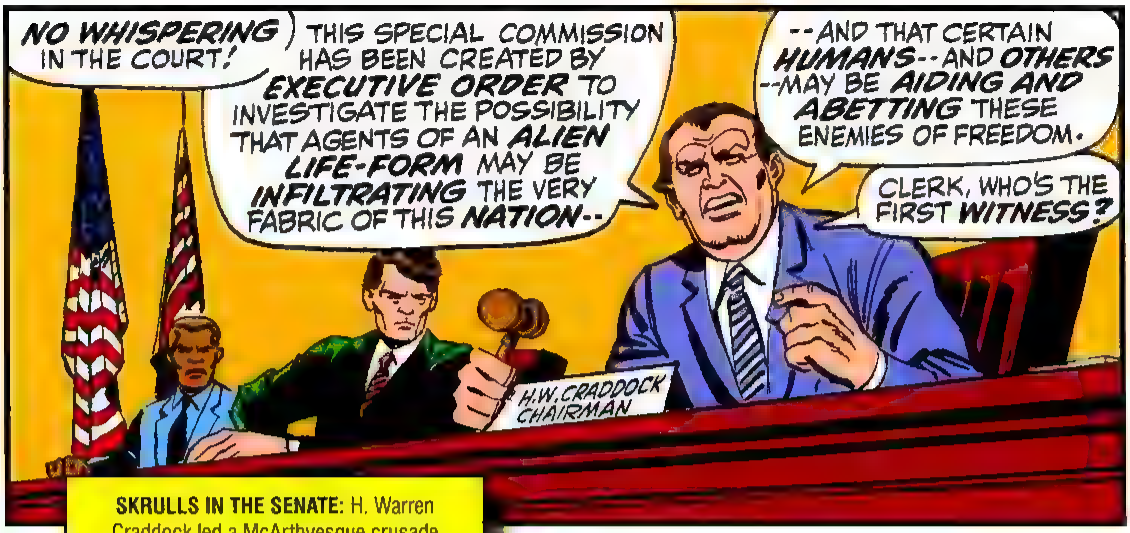
"When you're dividing your time between several things like that, as I've had happen to me … it's hard to get everything done, and you keep thinking, 'Well, I can fudge the deadline.'," Roy said. "Well, our deadlines were getting too tight to be fudged anymore So in desperation I had given the assignment to John (Buscema); not happy about doing it, as you can imagine, and just very lucky that I had somebody like John to do it. Even Sal, as good as he was, and fast as he was, wouldn't have been able to do it as fast as John could do it."

Neal did bring a few pages in, but at that point Roy could not use them, he said, since John had already begun work on the job. Neal told him afterward that he would someday do the entire pencil job and bring it to Roy, which Roy invited his former *X-Men* colleague to do. Still, Roy said, the pages never showed up. "I think that it would have turned out even better in certain ways if Neal had been able to do the last part because, while John drew just as well as Neal, Neal would have come up with some additional plot points, where John didn't have time to even think about plot points; all he had to do was take the story ideas and do it. And of course, it's amazing to me it turned out as well as it did. You look at that last issue … it doesn't look like any kind of rush art job by any stretch of the imagination."

One idea Neal presented to Roy, which never saw fruition, was to tell the final chapter of the war in a style of story that relied

HAVE YOU FOR-GOTTEN--
--THE INTER-STELLAR WAR BETWEEN KREE AND SKRULL?
WHAT OF CAPTAIN MARVEL, A MAN OF THE KREE IN EXILE HERE ON EARTH -- NOW CAP-TURED BY HIS PEOPLE'S BITTER RIVALS?
FOR HIS SAKE, WE AVENGERS STAND ACCUSED OF BEING SYMPATHIZERS TO THE ALIENS WHO WALK THIS WORLD.
WHAT LIKEWISE OF WANDA AND PIETRO -- TWO AVENGERS WHO WERE ALSO CAPTURED?
EVEN NOW, A SKRULL VESSEL HAS DOUBTLESS WHISKED THE THREE OF THEM TO THE ANDRO-MEDA GALAXY--
---WHILE WE STAND HERE-- DOING NOTHING!

A VISION OF WAR: Neal Adams dramatic layout catches up readers on all the preceding action in Avengers #95


NO WHISPERING IN THE COURT!
THIS SPECIAL COMMISSION HAS BEEN CREATED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER TO INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY THAT AGENTS OF AN ALIEN LIFE-FORM MAY BE INFILTRATING THE VERY FABRIC OF THIS NATION--
--AND THAT CERTAIN HUMANS--AND OTHERS --MAY BE AIDING AND ABETTING THESE ENEMIES OF FREEDOM.
CLERK, WHO'S THE FIRST WITNESS?
H.W. CRADDOCK CHAIRMAN

SKRULLS IN THE SENATE: H. Warren Craddock led a McArthyesque crusade against Mar-Vell and the Avengers as part of a Skrull invasion. (Art from *Avengers #92*)

on framing sequences. That chapter would begin and end about 1,000 years in the future, Roy explained, with the people of Earth at a museum or class, looking back on the war that had raged generations ago.

If Roy were to do it all over again, he said, one thing he would have done differently would have been to stretch the war out three issues longer to conclude in *Avengers* #100 "The other thing is, I wish I could have found a way to have involved the other books in it," Roy said. He has wanted to see the war reprinted, along with including one issue each of the other comics running at the time — such as *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Daredevil*, and even the then-defunct *X-Men* — "showing how all the other heroes were involved, whether they necessarily knew it or not, or were involved in major or minor ways in the Kree-Skrull War."

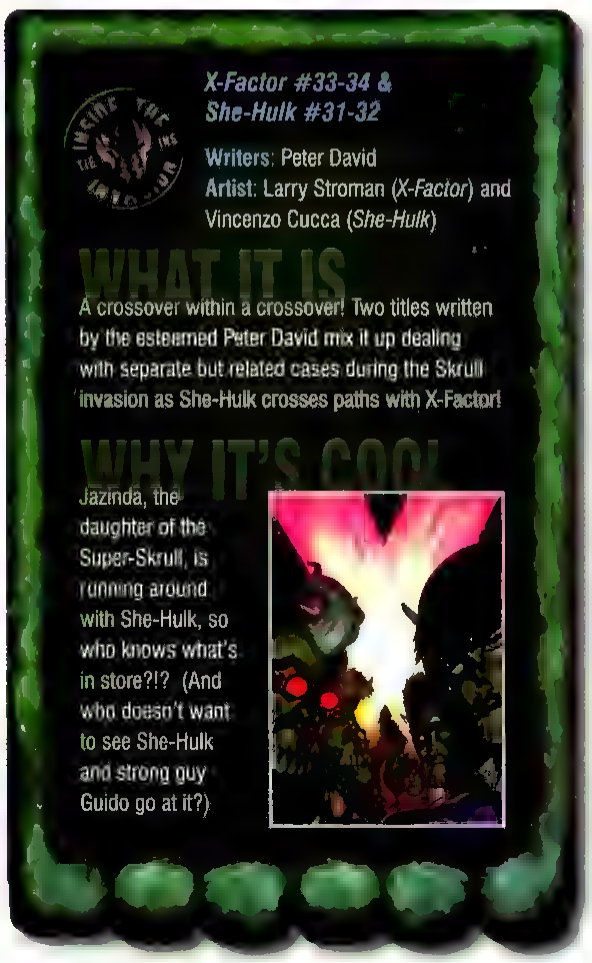
Perhaps Daredevil would have sensed that Senator H. Warren Craddock — who was leading the hunt for Kree spies and tearing down the Avengers' population — did not have the heartbeat of a normal human being. Rather, he was a Skrull incognito, plaguing our heroes then like they're doing now in *Secret Invasion*. "It was sort of like retroactively doing a company-wide, very late Silver Age story," Roy said.

While he doesn't follow comics much these days, Roy explained, he said, "I love the idea of *Secret Invasion*. It sounds like a fun idea."

THEMES OF A WAR

The Kree-Skrull War tackles the concepts of fear and mistrust by the majority toward the minority. Craddock, in the style of 1950s Communism foe Senator Joseph McCarthy, turned the public against Captain Marvel, and then against the Avengers for supporting him.

Meanwhile, on the heels of the 1960s civil rights movement came the blossoming love between the Vision and the Scarlet Witch who, as an android and a mutant, respectively, were themselves social minorities, often looked upon with a furrowed brow by those around them. *Avengers* #91 saw them share their first kiss. "It just was a natural outgrowth of where I'd been going with the characters … they were both outsiders," Roy said. "It wasn't … a major part of the Kree-Skrull War, but at the same time you're developing the big themes, you keep the others kind of juggled in the air, too."


X-Factor #33-34 & She-Hulk #31-32
Writers: Peter David
Artist: Larry Stroman (X-Factor) and Vincenzo Cucca (She-Hulk)
WHAT IT IS
A crossover within a crossover! Two titles written by the esteemed Peter David mix it up dealing with separate but related cases during the Skrull invasion as She-Hulk crosses paths with X-Factor!
WHY IT'S COOL
Jazinda, the daughter of the Super-Skrull, is running around with She-Hulk, so who knows what's in store?!? (And who doesn't want to see She-Hulk and strong guy Guido go at it?)

PART THREE:
WAR OF THE WEIRDS!
MEANWHILE, WHAT OF HIM FOR WHOM THE FALLEN AVENGERS DID SEARCH? WHAT OF CAPTAIN MARVEL?
YOU! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT FROM THE START.
ONCE MORE--THE SKRULLS WALK THE EARTH!
NOT "ONCE MORE," MAN OF THE KREE--
---BUT STILL!
PLEASE, MAR-VELL--DON'T ANGER THEM!
THEY'RE--NOT HUMAN. THEY LAY IN WAIT FOR US HERE--THEN THEY--

CAPTAIN MARVEL, A CAPTIVE: A key player in the Kree/Skrull War is the Kree warrior Mar-Vell (art by Neal Adams, left), held hostage while the Avengers race to save him (art by Sal Buscema)

"The Kree-Skrull War tackles the concepts of fear and mistrust by the majority toward the minority."

Another theme was that of David taking down Goliath Rick Jones, the longtime Marvel U., sidekick who referred to himself as "the original wheel #5" in issue #91, ended up saving Earth in the end by conjuring up Marvel superheroes from the 1940s to battle the Kree (with some help from the Kree Supreme Intelligence!) Also, Clint Barton was running out of the growth serum, which made him the super-sized Goliath, and in the end had to stop a Skrull ship — which was armed with a nuclear warhead and heading toward Earth — without any powers but those of a normal human being

And Earth itself, caught between two far more advanced warring civilizations, held its own with the help of the Avengers, almost as if one of those Pacific islands in *This Island Earth* had been able to stand up to the U.S. and Japan

"I just never let go of the idea that the human race would be like these little primitive islanders caught between two cultures they totally couldn't understand and even compete with," Roy said, "except I had to give it an additional twist by having it turn out that those two races know that they're sort of at an evolutionary dead end and they're not destined to evolve any more, particularly, while the human race would eventually surpass them, and they sensed that."

In the end, Earth prevailed, and the Kree-Skrull War went into comic book history as one of Marvel's great tales. "I'm kind of pleased it turned out as well as it did," Roy said. "I would say that this was definitely one of my favorite Marvel projects … and it was ratcheted up a little higher by the fact that Neal came in and did this fantastic job on it."

This timeless tale, and the talents of Roy Thomas, Neal Adams, and the Brothers Buscema, have never looked better than they do now in the brand new edition of Avengers: Kree/Skrull War TPB Painstakingly restored with sharp linework and matched to the original colors (which were way ahead of their time), this trade paperback is in stores now and ready to introduce you to the very first "Secret Invasion" epic to hit the MU!

Secret Invasion: Young Avengers/Runaways #1-3

Writer: Chris Yost
Artist: Takeshi Miyazawa

WHAT IT IS

CHRIS YOST: "The Skrull Invasion has begun, and both the Runaways and Young Avengers are right at the heart of the first beachhead: Times Square. And as each of the teams has a Skrull (or half-Skrull) as a member, the question 'Who do you trust?' really hits home for the kids. But there's a conspiracy within the Invasion which will impact all of them, as one of the team members is targeted for assassination by the Skrulls."

WHY IT'S COOL

CHRIS: "I just like the raw sense of wonder. These kids haven't seen it all, yet. Spider-Man has, the FF don't even blink when they go to the Savage Land, and the Avengers have time-traveled a thousand times. The kids get to see it all for the first time, and the reader gets to experience it again for the first time through their eyes."

Secret Invasion: Inhumans #1-4

Writer: Joe Pokaski
Artist: Tom Raney

WHAT IT IS

JOE POKASKI: "I don't know if you heard, but Black Bolt is a Skrull! And this kinda rocks the rest of the Inhuman Royal Family. With the pillar of the family absent, Medusa, Crystal, Karnak, Gorgon, and Triton have to get on the same page and fight their way through the Skrull invasion to uncover what the *@#& happened to their king."

WHY IT'S COOL

JOE: "Because it's a simple family drama…that is, if your family is ridiculously powerful and really, really pissed-off. The battle with the Skrulls is going to hit the moon hard, take off into the heavens, then dovetail back into the main *Secret Invasion* book in a big way. Also, there's a giant, slobbering, teleporting dog. And at the end of the day, what's cooler than Lockjaw?"

SKRULL'S PUBLIC ENEMY #1: Fantastic Four

WRITER ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA REVISITS MARVEL'S FIRST FAMILY AND FINDS...SKRULLS!

– BY CHRIS ARRANT

IT'S A TIMELESS BATTLE, the Skrulls versus Earth. And who would be Public Enemy #1 for the invading Skrulls but the Fantastic Four? They've been the Skrulls' primary adversary, all the way back to their debut in 1962's *Fantastic Four #2.* Aggressive, highly militaristic, shape-changing and green; well, except when they're shape-changing!

Writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa

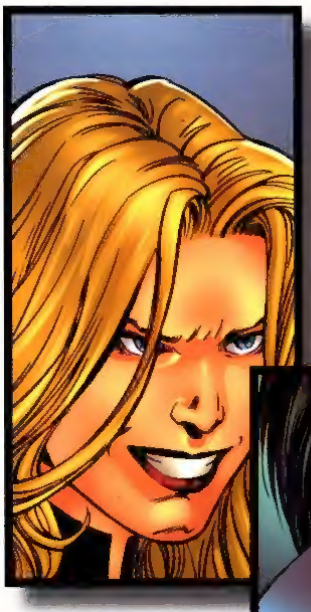
And that's how they've managed to get this far already, as seen in the currently running *Secret Invasion* limited series. One of their first missions was to take their previously mentioned main adversaries, the Fantastic Four, off the playing field. Reed Richards was shot point blank by a Skrully Hank Pym, and then took the Fantastic Four's Baxter Building out of the equation and straight to the Negative Zone.

Reed Richards? Incapacitated. Sue Richards? Whereabouts unknown, her form replaced by a Skrull. The rest of the group — The Human Torch, The Thing and even the kids — exiled to the Negative Zone. Tying into the events of the world-changing *Secret Invasion* limited series, *Secret Invasion: Fantastic Four* answers the question as to "what's next?" Written by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and drawn by artist Barry Kitson, this isn't the writer's first go-around with Marvel's First Family, having scribed thirty issues of the recent *Marvel Knights 4* series. He returns to the FF while on break from the writing staff of the television series *Big Love*, but doesn't hesitate to put them through the wringer.

SPOTLIGHT: In *Secret Invasion* #1, we see a Skrull masquerading as Sue Richards to gain access to the Baxter Building and systematically take them out of the game in terms of their invasion of Earth. Where does your series pick up?

ROBERTO: We start with a prologue that shows us what happened to the real Sue and how she was replaced, then immediately dovetail with *Secret Invasion* #1, but stay with the Fantastic Four and follow them as the invasion unfurls.

SPOTLIGHT: When was it determined that Lyja would be the Sue Storm impostor Skrull?



ROBERTO: Right before I started writing the series my editor said, "You know, if you want, you could do something with Lyja because..." and I interrupted him. I'd already bought the idea, hook, line, and sinker. Besides the fact that Lyja has such a history with the FF, and people are constantly wondering when we'll see her next, it suddenly gave my story a deep emotional hook: "The Skrulls are invading, and one of them is Johnny Storm's embittered ex." Done and done, you know?

SPOTLIGHT: Lyja actually has a devoted fanbase from her time as Johnny's irascible paramour. At the same time, she's had a very troubled background as a character. So are they gonna like her after she's done with the FF in your series?

ROBERTO: I don't know if readers are going to like Lyja after this series — or, rather, I can't say, since I don't want to give any story away — but I will say that, philosophically, I believe in second chances and redemption. (Though, conversely, I don't usually believe in those things when it comes to ex-girlfriends from Hell, so...how's that for vague?)

SPOTLIGHT: The Skrulls take them off Earth and out of their way — square into the Negative Zone. The Negative Zone is always ripe for adventure and strife, especially recently with it being home to the secret prison and being the genesis of the ongoing *Annihilation* event. Will the Fantastic Four run across these, or any other familiar faces?

ROBERTO: Readers will definitely be seeing Reed's secret prison, and some of the Negative Zone's creepier, crawlier inhabitants will definitely be around to cause trouble for the FF throughout the series.

SPOTLIGHT: Reed Richards is conspicuously absent in the series so far – that could be as a result of the hit he took at the end of *Secret Invasion* #1. Where's the founding father of the Fantastic Four for this limited series?

ROBERTO: Exactly where he is in *Secret Invasion* — in deep, deep trouble.

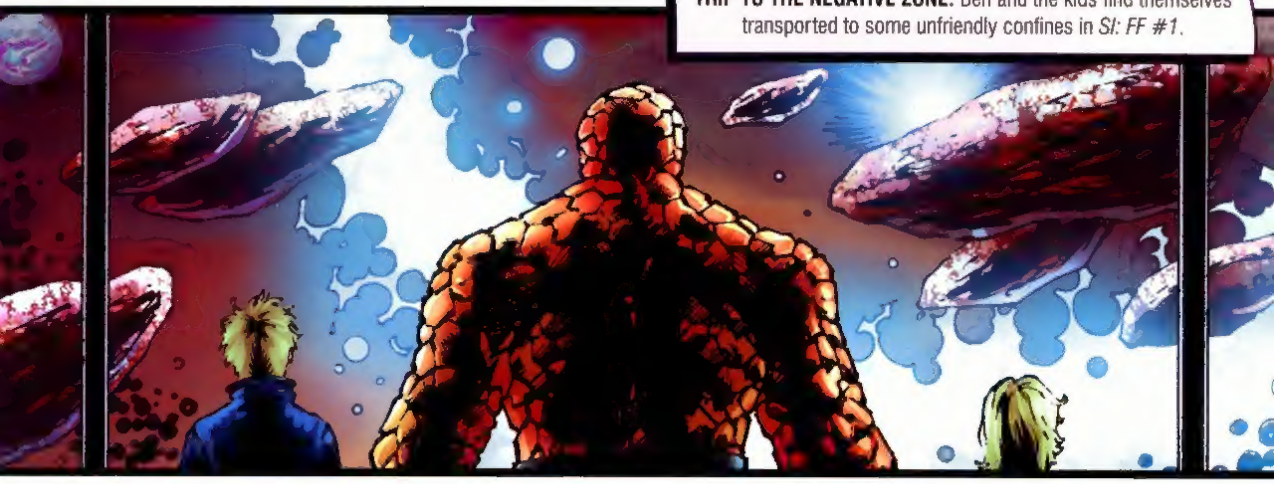
SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of Richards, what about Sue? We've seen the imposter Skrull come in and shake things up — where's Sue in all this?

ROBERTO: Like I said, we see Sue — the real Sue — in this series, in the first and third issues.

SPOTLIGHT: The Fantastic Four have been the main adversary of the Skrulls throughout the ages. How do the Skrulls view the Fantastic Four?

ROBERTO: Mortal enemies, plain and simple. The Skrulls know that the greatest threat to their success is the FF — which is why they go to such lengths to take them out.

THE LIES OF A SKRULL: Sue Storm's Skrull impostor is revealed to be a blast from Johnny Storm's romantic past...Lyja! (Art from *SI:FF #1*.)



TRIP TO THE NEGATIVE ZONE: Ben and the kids find themselves transported to some unfriendly confines in *SI: FF #1*.

SPOTLIGHT: You're no stranger to the Fantastic Four — you cut your teeth in comics with thirty issues on the *MK 4* series a few years back. How did that affect your understanding of the family?

ROBERTO: By the time my run on *MK 4* wound-down, I felt like I had just started to scratch the surface of these characters. Usually, when I hop off of something, it's because I feel like I'm running out of stories to tell; in the case of *MK 4*, however, it was because I was moving on to *Sensational Spider-Man*. I still had a good two years of FF stories to tell…I've been wanting to get back to Reed, Sue, Ben, and Johnny since *MK 4's* untimely demise. They've always been my favorite characters; they probably always will be.

SPOTLIGHT: You're working with artist Barry Kitson here, who from the looks of it is turning in the art of his career. What's it like knowing he's onboard to make your scripts a reality?

ROBERTO: Love Barry, love his art. A real gentlemen, excellent storytelling skills. I consider myself very, very lucky. To have him on interiors and Alan Davis on covers…? Forget about it… It's like all these A-listers were thrown at me, so my script had better be up to snuff, you know?

SPOTLIGHT: Your main writing gig right now is as a writer on the television series *Big Love*, which follows a family of polygamists. What's it like to balance the writing of a traditional family such as the Fantastic Four with such a non-traditional one?

ROBERTO: Actually, one of the main reasons I got my job on *Big Love* is because the creators read my first *MK 4* collection and saw how grounded and emotionally true (their words, not mine) my treatment of the FF was… I think they felt that if I could write a family of super heroes as honestly as I did, I should be able to do the same for a very different foursome (Bill Paxton and his three wives). It's interesting, though, to think of the FF as a traditional family…I guess my take on them has always been: They're not really a traditional family, but I treat them as one…

SPOTLIGHT: In the promotion for *Secret Invasion*, some of the posters have played it up in a B-Movie style. With the fact that I have it on expert authority that you are a big horror buff, how do you see the invasion angle playing into the horror aspect, ala *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*?

ROBERTO: That's exactly how I see it — analogous to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Or, you know, to make it more specific to the FF and this miniseries: "I Married an Alien from Outer-Space!" But yeah, I'm digging the marketing for this event; I love when the pulpy quality of comics is celebrated…

The first issue of SECRET INVASION: FANTASTIC FOUR is in stores now. Great to have you back on FF, Roberto!

Avengers: The Initiative #14-19

Writers: Dan Slott and Christos Gage
Artist: Stefano Caselli

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